



The Fountain
1023 N Chinowth St.
Visalia, CA 93291



The
FOUNTAIN
CHRISTIAN CHURCH

Intentionally Growing, and #LivingSENT for Jesus



*The
Fountain
Christian Church*

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Mon-Thurs 9:00 AM— 4:30 PM

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I'm So Thankful I Didn't Preach This Sermon

By Pastor Sam Sears

I am so thankful that I resisted the temptation to write a message around the concept of 2020 vision. So many pastors and even business leaders gave in. It's a common phrase, and we only had a short window to take advantage of the chronologically built-in memory device and excuse to bring up the topic. Vision is important. Proverbs 29:18 records, "Where there is no vision, the people are unrestrained." As we headed into 2020, the world was already changing, with increasing acceleration around us. Many churches and leaders felt the pressure to not be left behind and looked forward to a new set of "roaring twenties" that a recovering economy, lack of a new war, and advanced technology could bring. But we had no idea what was coming.

There is an old Yiddish proverb that says, "Man plans; God laughs." While I don't see scripture describing God as just waiting for us to fail, and then to mock us, He does instruct us about the proper way to trust, and even folks who made plans at the beginning of 2020 can, with hindsight, see that in some way it was "laughable."

Trusting in the Lord includes trusting Him in surprising times. Our plans may be changed, delayed, or dreams shattered, but He always knows what's next for us. When discussing the way we talk about our plans, James, the brother of Jesus, says, "Instead, you ought to say, 'If the Lord wills, we will live and also do this or that.'" (James 4:15) It isn't wrong to plan. It would be reckless not to do so. In the parable of the talents, we see that the one who simply buried his talent (money) in the ground and didn't invest was condemned as lazy. So, while we do need to have some plans, we simply can't "count our chickens before they hatch."

Proverbs 16:9 records, "The mind of man plans his way, But the LORD directs his steps." As we plan, we must not plan so tightly as to attempt to push God's intervention out of the way. He has given us standing orders like the Great Commission, and He has equipped us with gifts to use for His glory and for others' good. However, as we try to do that systematically, we can sometimes forget that at the end of the day, all those things can fail, and God will still be on the throne. He might even be calling us to walk through that failure, just as Jesus's first act after submitting to baptism was to be tempted in the wilderness, and He was led by the spirit.

I am sure many had big plans for 2020, I know we did, as a church. VBS, AWANA, even our VBS alternative, all had to be canceled. If it wasn't the pandemic, it was smoke from wildfires, or some other issue. We had planned to invest our finances in different ways, and yet the situation demanded that we put more money into broadcasting our services. Thankfully the God blessed the congregation, and our members remained faithful in equipping the

ministry this year.

We have plans for coming out of COVID-19, but as we make them, it's clear the world has changed. Hopefully, it's even more recognized by all that we must be flexible about those plans. COVID-19 is a world-changing event, in the way 911 shook churches to think about apologetics and evangelism to Muslims and in the way the printing press gave more people access to vast amounts of information. Our society is constantly connected, but now, with intentional personal isolation, we are even more digitally dependent. Any 2020 vision sermon given before COVID-19 would be obsolete now. The world has changed, digital is more important, and people are looking for new ways of community. When the lockdowns end, they will be hungry for interaction. Many will also be economically and emotionally impacted. Some will be more skeptical than ever due to the well-published hypocrisy of leaders.

Our key focus, of course, must continue to be Christ. After all, when the world is changing, "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever." (Hebrews 13:8) As we do so, we must also keep Colossians 4:5 in mind, "Conduct yourselves with wisdom toward outsiders, making the most of the opportunity." Our pre-COVID-19 plans and goals need to be re-evaluated, and we must continue to be nimble and able to respond quickly to whatever other changes or challenges are coming.

Prayer Concerns

January 2021

Pray for the desire and opportunity to effectively share your faith!

Our Nation and Leaders

Teachers & Students in Visalia

Health

Ana Morales, Ashley Banuelos, Barbara Grant, Bill Bianchi, Cindy Marks, Donna Black, Donna Eastin, Frank Henley, Jean Lamb, Kevin Guy, Pam Shattuck, Pauline Gurule, Rick Hamilton, Fred Wilder, Sandy Zinger

All those battling COVID

Cancer

Charles Douglass, Hazel Bahrenburg, Jiggy Greene, Joe Grant, Joe Ryan, Michael Elder, Mike Brazil, Olly Ajluni, Shannan Ajluni

Other Needs

Nina Suttles (Vision)

Military

Andie Richwine - Marine, Brett Boland - Virginia, Jason Mariel - Afghanistan, Matthew Calhoun - Fort Knox, Michael Reid - Fort Worth, TX, Preston Correa - Marines, RJ Ajluni - Navy

Missions News

By Judy Jameson

The year 2020 and COVID changed how we “do” missions in the church and how the missionaries we help support were able to serve. Their travel was restricted, schools were closed and gathering with others wasn’t possible. Most missionaries were in areas where you could not Facetime or Zoom to visually connect with others. As a church we did not have opportunities for them to visit and give us updates in person. The local missions we support have been overwhelmed with people whose income has been seriously affected, who are isolated, lonely and homeless.

We have had to reevaluate, to perfect our vision of how we do missions in a new year, a changed world. If we prayerfully consider the responsibilities the Lord has placed upon us individually and as a church, we can see new opportunities and challenges, joys and concerns.

We have an opportunity to share mission updates through Facebook and YouTube, with recorded videos which perhaps reach a broader audience. We can still send and receive emails and therefore newsletters and updates. Our church has connected with seniors who are isolated through Christmas cards and caroling. We thank the Lord that, as a church, we have been able to meet our yearly pledged support of all our missions and missionaries.

We continue to put aside 10% of our general offering into missions. Foreign mission support is about one fourth of our mission’s budget. Three fourths goes to local and national missions, some of which also have a global presence. This is a shift from the past. The change in emphasis is related to the severe decrease in Christianity in the United States. Secularism is very prevalent. This past year has opened the door for new thinking, new methods and opportunities for Christians to reach out to neighbors, friends, and family with the love of Christ, the Truth of the Gospel and the Hope we have through Jesus Christ. Please pray for wisdom and guidance for our church to meet and support our church in this endeavor and our mission organizations.

We also have a large percentage of people who are economically destitute, emotionally drained from isolation and homeless. We support Visalia Rescue Mission, Love INC, Visalia Senior Housing, and others who are providing for these people. Please continue to pray for them and please continue your support.

Please continue to pray for our missionaries, for health, encouragement, renewed vision and support. May we all prayerfully consider what opportunities the Lord has provided through the struggles of last year to help us draw closer to Him and renew our commitment to serve the lost, the poor and the needy.

A Baby Is Born!

By Rona Swanson

The scandal of an unwed mother no longer holds the harsh and damning sting that it did all those years ago when Mary was told that she would be with child...and bear the Messiah.

It was a good thing that the bearer of that message was so obviously heaven-sent. Even so, Mary knew that being pregnant without being married could carry the death sentence for her.

But she trusted in God.

When it became apparent that she was pregnant, her fiancé Joseph was not going to demand she be put to death...but he wasn’t going through with the marriage either...until...he got a visit from heaven and had the plan explained to him.

So here they were... the two of them, with knowledge too marvelous to grasp...still having to make their way in a world that did not know the wonder of it all.

A baby boy was on the way....delivered straight from heaven!

Angels knew the story...and had an impromptu concert when Jesus was born, rocking the heavens.

It was shocking news... earth-shaking news. May we gaze upon the wonder of it all anew.

Hear these words from John, chapter 3, from the Message:

This is how much God loved the world: He gave his Son, his one and only Son. And this is why: so that no one need be destroyed; By believing in him, anyone can have a whole and lasting life. God didn’t go to all the trouble of sending his Son merely to point an accusing finger... telling the world how bad it was. He came to help... to put the world right again.

And these words from Matthew, chapter 1:

“...and they will call him Immanuel, which means “God with us.”



January 2021

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
					1 6:30 AM Men's Group	2
3 8:30 am Worship 10:15 am Worship	4 10:45 am Prayer Warriors	5 1 pm Staff	6	7 10 am Bible Study	8 6:30 AM Men's Group	9
10 8:30 am Worship 10:15 am Worship	11 10:45 am Prayer Warriors 6 pm Women's Bible Study	12 1 pm Staff	13	14 10 am Bible Study	15 6:30 AM Men's Group	16
17 8:30 am Worship 9:45 am Annual Meet 10:15 am Worship	18 10:45 am Prayer Warriors	19 1 pm Staff	20	21 10 am Bible Study	22 6:30 AM Men's Group	23
24 8:30 am Worship 10:15 am Worship	25 10:45 am Prayer Warriors 6 pm Women's Bible Study	26 1 pm Staff	27	28 10 am Bible Study	29 6:30 AM Men's Group	30
31 8:30 am Worship 10:15 am Worship						

New(er) Logo:

Introducing a Revision Based on Feedback and Professional Input

2020, has been far different than we could have anticipated. We have had to continue to adapt and roll with the punches it has brought and continues to bring. The online realm was already a growing emphasis for us, and all churches. It's why after I came on board, we went with a new website, created an Instagram, and purchased a subscription to social media images and a scheduler so we could be active where people are. Now with mandatory social distancing and stay at home orders, the importance of our online outreach has reached an all time high. Christian author and church growth specialist Thom Rainer says the following in, becoming a Welcoming Church, "Most guests go to your church website before they ever set foot on your church property." Our Website, and our social media, help form individuals first impressions about our church.

Let's look at some recent history. After we changed our name to the Fountain, we needed a new logo. We spent some time tweaking and got feedback from church members. A key takeaway was that what remains important is the Cross being prominent in our logo. We then finalized it and moved forward... but we soon discovered a problem.

While many of our members aren't on social media, the age group the church has affirmed, including through church wide surveys, that we want to reach as new members, are. When those individuals saw our new logo, they had a consistent feedback, "it looks old fashioned." Younger members in our church communicated the same thing.

In a recent strategic planning session, the elders, staff, and members of the Organic Outreach Team got to discuss and plan about the best way to reach our community, as we are commanded to do. (Matthew 28:19-20, and Col 4:5-6) Several ideas came up, but one key issue was how our online presence was perceived. After comparing other logos with our own, it was understandable why we were being perceived as "old fashioned."

We began with the existing members desire for a prominent cross, and even though after digging into current trends, and learning it was not a common design choice, it was a nonnegotiable element to whatever our new logo might be. We want to respect our history, and compromise between older and new preferences when possible. We hope our logo reflects this just as part of keeping the "F" in FCC was to continue to honor our initial name of First Christian Church.

We spent hours looking at logos, and reading articles, including data

from Barna. We learned that especially for social media, Logo's need to be simple. Think of the way the Facebook "F" looks. It has really helped set a design trend. While most of the staff didn't even like that design trend, we had to communicate in a way that the current generation would understand. A single letter that is stylized is among, if not, the most popular current trend for logo designs. It needed to work small, on a phone screen, or large, on the side of a building. Successful logos could often be worn as a small emblem on a polo. After learning current trends, we got to work.

We created several tests in photoshops. This time we took those tests and got feedback from the folks at the age rang we want to focus on, so Millennials, teenagers, and non-Christians. After their feedback, we narrowed it down and continued to tinker. While I have some experience in design and friends in marketing, I recognized we need a professional opinion, as trends have changed, especially in church logos, and we wanted to make sure we picked something that could last, not something that would be obsolete quickly.

Carrie contacted a well-known graphic designer, who has done work for churches as well as national ad campaigns and sent him what we were working with. We thought it might be a starting point to getting a quote to do some more work, but they responded with 2 minor tweaks and their approval! It also didn't cost us a thing, so we appreciate their free consult.

In the coming year, we hope that bumper stickers, yard signs, and t-shirts will join our online outreach using this new logo. We realize, it's geared towards newer style than folks are used to, but we are confident this will help us make a better first impression with people.

Changes like this, are why we are among the 80% of American Churches who survived this year! But we don't want to just survive, we want to work as a team, and thrive, bring God Glory, and I look forward to seeing how we focus on the main things, continue to unify with one another, and go about God's work this year.



God Moves in the Midst of a Pandemic

By Carrie Guy, Associate Pastor

It's been amazing in the midst of the hardest collective year ever, to see God move in little and big ways. Women's ministry hasn't looked the same, but we've continued to see God move. Ladies from Monday noon study have shared some wonderful connections they have made, and it's been encouraging to hear. My Monday evening studies have had some amazing God moments as well.

We've had some new faces, and it's been great to get to know Charlotte, a woman new to our church, who was just needing to talk to someone, but got much more in the process, and Salina, a woman, that I came to know through her husband's interaction with our church as a boy.

People are seeing the needs of their souls and we are encountering each other on a deeper level as a result.

We just finished up our study on Monday evenings but will start a new study on January 11th. We meet from 6-7pm and do so every other week. We spread out so we have space, but we are able to share in the word and share our heart. If you are looking to join us, please let us know. Either contact the office or message us on our website.

Spring Break will bring new things, we are hopeful to kickoff Wednesday nights again. With Awana and men's study, women's study as well as youth (time in the works) so that we can have a family night. When this happens my study will switch from Monday nights to Wednesday nights. For now, Monday is working and if this year has taught us anything, it's to roll with whatever comes.

God is teaching us to rely on him and put our trust in what he is doing. Are you seeing that? Be blessed by that spiritual growth experience!

How are you feeling? Check in with us and let us know how we can walk alongside you, even if from a distance. We are family whether we are together or apart so let's continue to find ways to cherish that bond or foster it so when we get back to in person life we are more than happy to run back to church. We love you! Blessings on this New Year. I know there won't be some magical change on January 1st, but I am hopeful that we will see the light again as we move through the year.



Birthdays & Anniversaries

January 2021

Kevin Guy.....	1	Caleb Guy.....	26
Donna Eastin.....	9	Ann Johnson.....	26
Donna Black.....	10	Ruthy Shane.....	27
Joshua Yale.....	11	Lennon Sanchez.....	28
JoAnne Jordan.....	13	Caleb Gunning.....	30
Jeremiah Shane.....	13	<i>Happy Anniversary!</i>	
Katherine Guy.....	15	Mike & Susan Leary.....	10
Andrea Lara.....	15	Pat & Joyce Hogan.....	26
Don Jones.....	18	Chuck & Donna Romer.....	26
Kenley Gunning.....	24		

Attendance & Giving

December 2020

Date.....	Attendance.....	Giving.....
December 6.....	67.....	\$7,372.00
December 13.....	72.....	\$4,488.00
December 20.....	72.....	\$2,288.00
December 27.....	71.....	\$4,561.00
Online Giving.....		<u>\$3,000.00</u>
.....	Total.....	\$21,709.00

Annual Congregational Meeting

By Pastor Sam Sears

This year's Annual Meeting will be held on **January 17th** between our two services.

We will begin at **9:45 am** in the sanctuary.

The items on the agenda this year will be:

1. Approval of new Elders
2. Approval of the 2021 Budget